Health and Welfare Canada
Santé et Bien-être social Canada

Status of Day Care in Canada 1988

A Review of the Major Findings of the National Day Care Study (1988)

National Child Care Information Centre
Child Care Programs

Canada

Preface

During the summer of 1971, the Canada Assistance Plan Directorate of the Department of National Health and Welfare conducted a national survey to provide an inventory of day care spaces which would serve as a baseline from which to compare future growth in day care and to evaluate the impact of any new initiative of the federal government in the day care field.

These reports were updated annually under the title *Status of Day Care in Canada*.

Status of Day Care in Canada (1988) is a continuation of this series and is intended to present to Canadians a general overview of day care services in Canada.

If you have any comments on *Status of Day Care in Canada* (1988), please contact the National Child Care Information Centre, Social Service Programs Branch, Health and Welfare Canada, Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 1B5.

Major Findings

Increase in Day Care Spaces

As indicated in Table 1, there has been a significant increase in the number of day care spaces since 1971.

The number of day care spaces has increased 15 fold since 1971. This growth is mainly attributed to the rapid rate of growth of women with young children entering the labour force and to the growing public acceptance of day care as an appropriate support service to the family.

The 8.2% increase in the number of day care spaces over 1987, in itself, would represent a significant increase. However, the actual growth rate is higher. Data from Ontario in the past has been taken from the Day Nurseries Information System. This system, as noted in past *Status of Day Care* reports tends to under estimate the number of non-profit spaces. It also does not provide the number of spaces by age of children but only by enrolment. Enrolment for the past few years is about 122% of licensed spaces.

For 1988, Ontario was able to provide data from the relatively new "Direct Operating Grant" data base, which can provide accurate number of spaces by age group.

If the 122% formula was applied to Ontario's 1988 data, in order to compare them to 1987 data, Ontario would have an enrolment figure of 117 701. This would raise the Canadian totals to 284 848 representing an increase over 1987 of 41 303 or 16.96%.

This is a remarkable rate of growth -- although not as high as the 23% increase of 1984 -- higher than 1985 (12%) and 1986 (14.6%) and 1987 (10.4%).

Age Groups Served by Day Care Programs

As indicated in Table 2, the availability of day care services differ according to the age of the child.

As in the past, day care centre spaces are primarily being used by children between the ages of 3 and 6 years. The spaces available to this age group account for 140 625 or 60.4% of the total day care centre spaces.

There are 38 464 or 16.5% of the total centre spaces for the under three's. This is up from 1987 when there were only 28 068 spaces representing 12.93% of total centre spaces.

Family day care has traditionally placed greater emphasis on serving the under three's. 1988 is no exception with 14 399 spaces going to this age group representing 46.7% of the total family day care spaces.

School-age day care spaces, as was true in 1987, continues to have more priority than in earlier years. There was an increase of 9521 for this age group over 1987 and now constitutes 19.91% of the day care spaces.

Sponsorship of Day Care Centres

Tables 3 and 4 show the distribution and relative growth of day care spaces under different types of sponsorship.

Traditionally it was thought that the non-profit centres would serve children from lower-income families and the commercial centres would serve middle and upper-income families.

Initially, this was true. Over the years, however, the more typical pattern was for the non-profit centres to serve the low-income and higher-income families, while the modest-income families, who were not eligible for a subsidy and could not afford the relatively higher fees of the non-profit centres, were served by the commercial sector.

There now appears to be a trend for provinces to extend subsidies to families within a wider income range and to utilize both the non-profit and the commercial sector in delivering subsidized day care services. Therefore, it is likely that differences in the socio-economic characteristics of families

being served by the two sectors will largely disappear.

In 1968, 76% of all day care spaces were under commercial auspices. The percentage of commercial spaces dropped over the years, but for the past few years has been fairly stable--between 38% and 43%.

Data from 1986 and from 1987 appeared to suggest that the commercial sector was in the process of regaining its previous dominance. In 1986 the commercial sector added 4195 more spaces than did the non-profit sector. In 1987 the commercial sector added 2381 more spaces than the non-profit sector.

1988 saw an apparent reversal of this trend. The non-profit sector showed an increase of 17 576, while the commercial sector experienced a decrease of 1474.

However, it should be noted that most, if not all of this reversal is a result of better data. As footnoted in past *Status of Day Care* reports, Ontario's data system under estimated the non-profit sector and over estimated the commercial sector. As stated earlier the data available this year from Ontario's Direct Operating Grant Data Base is able to accurately profile the two sectors.

In 1987, Ontario reported 43 237 non-profit centre spaces. In 1988, using the new data base, reported 52 650 non-profit centre spaces and 33 711 commercial spaces.

Consequently, it is premature to make judgements as to whether the balance between the two sectors is likely to change in the foreseeable future. Tables 3 and 4 show the distribution and relative growth of day care spaces under different types of sponsorship.

Day Care Spaces by Province

Table 5 presents full-time centre spaces and family day care spaces by province, and Table 6 provides provincial comparison by auspices.

Full-time Day Care Spaces in Canada in Relation To The Number of Day Care Age Children of Parents in the Labour Market

The mandate for *Status of Day Care in Canada* has been to show the year by year growth patterns in day care.

However, there has always been some interest in relating these findings to the degree of unmet need. Obviously, the data provided by the provinces does not directly lend itself to this type of analysis. The early *Status of Day Care in Canada* reports compared the number of full-time day care spaces to the number of children of mothers who were in the labour force in order to thoroughly address this question. The problem with this approach is that many mothers work part time and would not require a full-time day care space. This creates an exaggerated impression of the degree of unmet need.

On the other hand, if only the numbers of children where both parents work full time are used, there may be built-in underestimations of the need in that, if a parent is working 20 hours a week, he/she would not likely find a part-time day care space matching the hours needed for care.

Consequently, *Status of Day Care in Canada* now utilizes a format, which presents four separate compilations estimating the percentage of children that can be served by existing day care spaces. The four separate compilations will be done for children 0-17 months; 18 months and under 36 months; 3 years and under 6 years; and 6 years and under 13 years.

It is important to note that the above-mentioned approach only compares the number of full-time day care spaces to the number of children by various ages where the parents are involved in one of the four categories. It should not be construed to mean that these are the numbers of children whose parents would choose a formalized day care setting if it were made available. The existing evidence of parental preference is sketchy at best, but it does seem to suggest that about 50% of those not using formalized care would do so if provided the opportunity. However, there are a number of variables that need to be researched before definitive statements can be made.

Another important consideration is the impact of full-time kindergarten and part-time junior kindergarten in the school system on the demand for day care. Some field observations indicate that they do have a significant impact. Table 2 presents some indication that the percentage of spaces for the 5-year-olds and to a lesser extent for the 4-year-olds are significantly lower than for the 3-year-olds. Unfortunately, some of the provinces have difficulty in providing age breakdowns in the centres and we have had to rely to some extent on estimates. Therefore, the reliability of the age breakdown is much less that for the data on the number of spaces and the auspices of spaces. This is another area where research is sadly needed. It is likely that part-time spaces will become more relevant for many in the age 4 and 5 categories.

Tables 7, 8, 9, and 10 present the four categories relating the parental work situation by ages of children to the percentage of full-time day care spaces available.

Table 1 - Distribution of Centre Spaces, Family Day Care Spaces and Day Care Centres by Year

Number of Spaces	*March 31 1971*	*March 31 1980*	*March 31 1985*	*March 31 1987*	*March 31 1988*	*Increase Over 1987* *No.*	*%*
Centre Spaces	16 791	98 238	169 751	216 685	232 787	16 102	7.43
Family Day Care Spaces	600	10 903	22 623	26 860	30 839	3 979	14.8
Total Spaces	17 391	109 135	192 374	243 545	263 626*	20 081*	8.2*
Day Care Centres	682	2 719	4 685	6 026	6 532		

* Ontario's data for 1987 is on an enrolment basis and their 1988 data is by licensed spaces. (See text for implication).

Table 2 - Spaces in Day Care Centres and Family Day Care Homes by Age of Children Served (1988)

*Ages**	*Centres* *No.*	*%*	*Family Day Care Homes* *No.*	*%*
0-17 mos.	10 302	4.43	5 453	17.7
18-35 mos.	28 162	12.1	8 946	29.0
3 years	55 681	23.9	4 137	13.4
4 years	55 851	23.9	4 097	13.3
5 years	29 093	12.49	3 897	12.6
6-10 yrs.	49 650	21.3	3 706	12.0
10-12 yrs.	4 048	1.7	603	2.0
Total	232 787	99.82	30 839	100.00

* Some provinces are not able to provide breakdowns by ages and in such cases, estimates have been provided.

Table 3 - Sponsorship of Centre Spaces 1979, 1985, and 1988

	1979		*1985*		*1988*	
Type of Sponsorship	*Spaces*	*% of Spaces*	*Spaces*	*% of Spaces*	*Spaces*	*% of Spaces*
Non-Profit	42 534	50.59	106 131	62.51	143 875	61.8
Commercial	41 549	49.41	63 631	37.49	88 912	38.22
Total	84 083	100.00	169 762	100.00	232 787	100.00

Table 4 - Sponsorship of Centre Spaces 1987 and 1988

Type of Sponsorship	*1987 Spaces*	*1988 Spaces*	*Increase*	
			No.	*%*
Non-Profit	126 299	143 875	17 576	13.92*
Commercial	90 386	88 912	-1 474	-1.63*
Total	216 685	232 787	16 102	7.43

* See text for discussion for Ontario's data

Table 5 - Interprovincial Comparison of Day Care Spaces

Provinces	*Centre Spaces*	*Family Day Care Spaces*
Newfoundland	1 640	-
Prince Edward Island	1 584	49
Nova Scotia	5 508	145
New Brunswick	5 175	33
Quebec	59 892*	4 850
Ontario	86 361	10 115
Manitoba	9 172	2 057
Saskatchewan	3 700	1 900
Alberta	41 161**	6 157
British Columbia	17 816	5 494
Northwest Territories	403	-
Yukon	375	72
National Totals	232 787	30 839

* 20 898 of Quebec spaces are operated under the auspices of the Department of Education.

** Alberta provided data for preschool spaces and municipal officials provided estimates for school aged spaces.

Table 6 - Interprovincial Comparison of Day Care Spaces by Auspices

Provinces	*Non-Profit*	*Commercial*	*Total*
Newfoundland	541	1 099	1 640
Prince Edward Island	811	773	1 584
Nova Scotia	3 345	2 163	5 508
New Brunswick	3 193	1 982	5 175
Quebec	50 340*	9 552	59 892
Ontario	52 650	33 711	86 361
Manitoba	8 148	1 024	9 172
Saskatchewan	3 616	84	3 700
Alberta	9 638	31 523**	41 161
British Columbia	11 172	6 644	17 816
Northwest Territories	283	120	403
Yukon	138	237	375
National Totals	143 875	88 912	232 787

* 20 898 Quebec spaces are operated under the auspices of the Department of Education.
** Alberta provided data for preschool spaces and municipal officials provided estimates for school aged spaces.

Table 7 - Infant Day Care - Children 0-17 Months

Category of Parent	*Number of Children*	*% of Children Served*
Mothers in labour force	303 954	5.18
Full-time working parents	154 319	10.21
Full-time working parents plus students	162 334	9.70
Full-time working parents plus students, plus parents working 20 to 29 hours a week	206 742	7.62

As of March 1988, there were 15 755 full-time day care spaces for children 0-17 months of age. As can be seen from the above four compilations, the percentage of children these spaces can serve differs according to which groups of parents are included in the compilation.

Table 8 - Children between the Ages of 18 Months and 36 Months

Category of Parent	*Number of Children*	*% of Children Served*
Mothers in labour force	320 761	11.57
Full-time working parents	174 131	21.31
Full-time working parents plus students	185 020	20.05
Full-time working parents plus students, plus parents working 20 to 29 hours a week	234 683	15.81

As of March 1988, there were 37 108 full-time day care spaces for children between the ages of 18 months and 36 months.

Table 9 - Children between the Ages of 3 and 6 Years

Category of Parent	*Number of Children*	*% of Children Served*
Mothers in labour force	652 922	23.40
Full-time working parents	344 258	44.37
Full-time working parents plus students	368 797	41.42
Full-time working parents plus students, plus parents working 20 to 29 hours a week	458 854	33.29

As of March 1988, there were 152 756 day care spaces for children between the ages of 3 and 6 years.

Table 10 - Children between the Ages of 6 and 13 Years

Category of Parent	*Number of Children*	*% of Children Served*
Mothers in labour force	1 634 010	3.55
Full-time working parents	932 782	6.22
Full-time working parents plus students	990 565	5.86
Full-time working parents plus students, plus parents working 20 to 29 hours a week	1 213 983	4.78

As of March 1988, there were 58 007 day care spaces for school-age children.

Glossary

Day Care Facility

For the purposes of this report, a day care facility refers to a licensed or provincially approved centre or private home which provides care for children outside of their own home for eight to ten hours a day.

Centre Care

Care that is given to groups of children in a licensed day care centre.

Commercial Centre

A licensed day care centre that is set up as a proprietary operation. It includes the larger franchise operations, as well as the small singularly owned centre.

Community Board Centre

A licensed day care centre that is established as a non-profit organization and is governed by a community board of directors.

Non-Profit Day Care

For the purposes of this report, non-profit day care includes both the Community Board Centres and the Cooperative Day Care programs.

Public Day Care

A licensed day care centre owned and operated by a municipal or provincial government.

Family Day Care

Family day care is defined as a program involving the selection and supervision by a government or authorized private agency of private families who give care to children during the day.

Private or Casual Day Care Arrangements

This involves the use of babysitters or other similar types of arrangements made between the parent and the provider and which are not under the supervision of a licensing authority or day care agency.

Infant Day Care

Care provided by a day care centre or a family day care home for children under the age of two.

Preschool Day Care

Care provided by a day care centre or a family day care home for children aged two to six.

School-Age Day Care

Supervision of young school-age children before school begins, during the noon hour, after class, and on days when school is not in session.

Latch Key Child

This term originated from the observation that many young school-age children of working parents were carrying house keys to gain entrance to their homes between the hours that school closed and their parents returned from work.